

# SeaWorld says it will make life better for its killer whales

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.18.14

Word Count **445**



SeaWorld San Diego visitors view a killer whale through a window at the park on Aug. 14, 2014. Battered by controversy over its treatment of the orcas, SeaWorld said it plans to double the size of the orca environments at its parks. Photo: Don Bartletti/Los Angeles Times/MCT

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — SeaWorld San Diego has been criticized over its treatment of orcas, the giant sea creatures better known as killer whales. On Friday, it announced several changes to make their lives better.

A documentary called "Blackfish" attacks SeaWorld's treatment of its killer whales.

SeaWorld will double the size of its orca pool. It will cover 1.5 acres and will be 50 feet deep and 350 feet long. SeaWorld San Diego has 10 orcas.

Known as the Blue World Project, the new pool will allow visitors to see the orcas below the water line. It is described as the first of its kind.

## Watching The Whales

SeaWorld officials say the pool will be completed by 2018. Other SeaWorld parks, in Florida and Texas, will soon begin building their own new pools.

SeaWorld's president, Jim Atchison, said the new pool will change "how visitors experience killer whales." It will provide "up close" views.

Atchison said visitors will have a range of views. They will be able to "walk alongside the whales as if they were at the shore." Or, they can watch the whales swim underwater or see them from above.

SeaWorld will also give \$10 million to pay for studies of the whales. Finally, it will put together a committee of scientists to oversee its orca program.

The goal of the new committee of scientists is to improve the "health and well-being" of SeaWorld's orcas. Its members will include experts in different areas.

### **"Bigger Prison Is Still A Prison"**

SeaWorld will also spend an extra \$10 million. The money will pay for studies of orcas in the wild.

The new plans did not satisfy one important animal rights group: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). The group has called for the orcas to be put in large ocean shelters.

"A bigger prison is still a prison," said PETA lawyer Jared Goodman.

SeaWorld's announcement came at a time when things are going badly for the company. Since the release of the documentary, many people have grown angry at SeaWorld.

### **Orca Show Its Most Popular**

SeaWorld San Diego attracts 4.4 million people a year. The orca show has long been the most popular event. Now, though, some people are staying away.

The company admitted that ticket sales have dropped. Attendance has been hurt by claims the orcas are being mistreated.

Still, San Diego's leaders strongly support SeaWorld. The company provides many jobs in the city. Earlier this year, the San Diego City Council voted to make March "SeaWorld Month."

City Council President Todd Gloria praised the new pool. He said it will make things better for the whales and for visitors to the park.

## Quiz

- 1 According to the article, why has attendance dropped at SeaWorld?
- (A) People have responded to the recently released documentary and have heard that the orcas are treated poorly at SeaWorld.
  - (B) PETA is unhappy with the way SeaWorld treats orcas and has demanded that SeaWorld keep them in large ocean shelters.
  - (C) People have responded to the recently released documentary and have heard that SeaWorld is spending too much money on research.
  - (D) SeaWorld's new research program has been very expensive and has not improved the Orca situation even though it has raised ticket prices.

- 2 Select the paragraph from the section "Orca Show Its Most Popular" that BEST describes why the city administration is in favor of SeaWorld.

- 3 Read the sentence from the article.

*A documentary called "Blackfish" attacks SeaWorld's treatment of its killer whales.*

Which of the following options BEST replaces "attacks" in the sentence above?

- (A) invades
- (B) criticizes
- (C) pushes
- (D) tackles

- 4 Read the sentence from the article.

*Finally, it will put together a committee of scientists to oversee its orca program.*

If the following words were to replace "oversee" in the sentence above, which one would change the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) overlook
- (B) manage
- (C) supervise
- (D) watch

## Answer Key

- 1 According to the article, why has attendance dropped at SeaWorld?
- (A) **People have responded to the recently released documentary and have heard that the orcas are treated poorly at SeaWorld.**
  - (B) PETA is unhappy with the way SeaWorld treats orcas and has demanded that SeaWorld keep them in large ocean shelters.
  - (C) People have responded to the recently released documentary and have heard that SeaWorld is spending too much money on research.
  - (D) SeaWorld's new research program has been very expensive and has not improved the Orca situation even though it has raised ticket prices.

- 2 Select the paragraph from the section "Orca Show Its Most Popular" that BEST describes why the city administration is in favor of SeaWorld.

**Paragraph 15:**

**Still, San Diego's leaders strongly support SeaWorld. The company provides many jobs in the city. Earlier this year, the San Diego City Council voted to make March "SeaWorld Month."**

- 3 Read the sentence from the article.

*A documentary called "Blackfish" attacks SeaWorld's treatment of its killer whales.*

Which of the following options BEST replaces "attacks" in the sentence above?

- (A) invades
- (B) **criticizes**
- (C) pushes
- (D) tackles

4 Read the sentence from the article.

*Finally, it will put together a committee of scientists to oversee its orca program.*

If the following words were to replace “oversee” in the sentence above, which one would change the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) **overlook**
- (B) manage
- (C) supervise
- (D) watch